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EVIL TENDENCIES OF THE PRESENT CRISIS.

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DISCOURSE,

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DISCOURSE :

GENESIS VI. 4. The same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown.

We know but very little of the state of mankind, during the sixteen hundred and fifty six years before the flood. The history of the whole of that period is condensed within the compass of six short chapters. But, brief as is that history, it is long enough to give us some idea of the overwhelming tide of iniquity, which preceded the deluge of waters. If we are not particularly informed respecting men's acquaintance, at that time, with the arts and sciences, we do learn that they had advanced far in wicked devices. Whether they were, or were not, wise in Geology and Astronomy, is a matter of conjecture ; but it is certain that they were wise to do evil. How sad, how appalling the moral picture of the antediluvian world, as drawn by the inspired penman !

We read that as God looked upon the earth, he saw that it was "corrupt ;" "filled with violence,"—that is, with the fierce outbreaking of base lusts and passions ; he saw that "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart," or, his every intent and purpose, "was only evil continually." It is said, "There were giants in the earth in those days,"—by which may be meant, giants not so much in stature, as in wickedness. There were Goliaths, perhaps, in bodily greatness ; certainly, in heaven-daring iniquity. There were Sampsons in sin, if not in strength.

And what an insight into the depravity of the antediluvians is afforded by our text. By this we learn who were their *popu-*

lar men. Now, the character of those whom the people esteem, is an index of the character of the people themselves. Who, then, were the honored ones of that day? We read that righteous Noah "found grace in the eyes of the *Lord*,"—but he was no favorite of the *people*. They, it would seem from the sacred record, preferred brutal courage to moral heroism. They had enthroned might above right; or with them, as our text informs us, "mighty men" were the "men of renown." Those noted for their deeds of prowess, violence, and blood, appear to have been the celebrated individuals. Yes, while he, who was of such distinguished excellence, that he is described, by the inspired historian, as one who "walked with God," meets with the frown and contempt of that perverse generation, the Cæsars and Napoleons seem to have won their esteem, and were, doubtless, welcomed with shouts of applause. And dreadful, most dreadful must be the degeneracy of the age, in which such is the case; when the multitude give their sympathies and homage to the men of violence, rather than to the men of peace, admiring and honoring the ambitious destructive warrior, instead of the hero of truth and duty.

But, alas! in the picture of that degenerate race, swept away by the flood, do we not see revealed, to a sad extent, the likeness of the people of our own time, and of our own country? Who now are the men of renown, the favorites of the people? Whose names are rung with applause through the land? Whose exploits under the titles,—"*The brilliant achievement*," "*The splendid affair*," "*The unparalleled gallantry*,"—are blazoned in the public journals to an admiring nation? Are they not those of the mighty men of our times,—men mighty to carry on a crusade of blood and rapine against a sister Republic, to invade her homes and hew down her people?

It is proposed then to call your attention to two of the evil

tendencies, to which we are exposed, in the present crisis of our national affairs.

1. We are liable to be blinded to the miseries and crimes of the Mexican war, by what is called the glory of our arms.

More than twelve months have elapsed since the forces of the two contending nations first met in deadly encounter on the banks of the Rio Grande. From that time to the present, the news from the scene of strife has been seized with the greatest avidity. We have followed our army in its progress from battle to battle, and from victory to victory, from the bloody contests at Pallo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Monterey and Buena Vista, to the terrible bombardment of Vera Cruz, and the awful slaughter of Cerro Gordo, until we find the troops pressing on exultingly to the Mexican capital. And, as we watch their movements, we are prone to participate, to some extent, in the excitement that urges forward the soldiers in their work of ruin. We are in great danger of being bewitched by the fascinations, or dazzled by the splendor, in which the newspaper press arrays the career of conquests. Besides, when we have so often set before us the bonfires, the grand illuminations, and public rejoicings for the success of our arms, and the imposing funeral honors rendered to the remains of those who "rushed to the deadly breach;" when we read that the orator, the sculptor, and the painter, are laboring to pay their most flattering tribute of respect to the memory of the slain, how apt are we to lose sight of the grim and ghastly character of the contest in which they perished,—if we are not even drawn into favor with that contest, by the bewildering charm with which it is invested. And here we should be on our guard.

One reason why war has been so long tolerated,—converting the earth to such an extent into a Golgotha, and rendering the

history of man so tragical a story,—is, because men have been deceived by the glare thrown over its foul deeds. The heinousness of its guilt has been concealed under a showy dress. Amid the pomp and circumstance of the thing, the eye has been turned away from the horrors thereof. It is time that the pernicious delusion, under which the world has labored, was broken. It is time that men had begun to see, in its true light, the iniquity of that business, which is, in the language of the late Dr. Channing, “the concentration of all crimes ;” or, as Napoleon, the prince of warriors, stigmatized it—“the trade of barbarians.” We should turn our attention from the paean, the luxuriant garland, the triumphal arch, the brilliant illumination and the festive board, to the confused noise of battle, and the garments rolled in blood ; to those who grasp the cold ground in agony, and bite the earth in death. Surely, when we do this, when we strip war of its disguise, pluck its waving plumes, tear off its gilded epauletts, and various gaudy trappings, and look the demon in the face, we must shudder at the sight.

May we do thus with the war in which we are now involved. Could the dreadful waste of treasure and of blood, occasioned thereby, have been avoided without any sacrifice of the true interest or honor of the country ; is the war, as we have reason to believe, waged in part, if not mainly, for the purpose of extending and perpetuating that system of oppression, which is now eating into the heart, and consuming the very vitals of the nation,—let us not be so beguiled, by the reported splendor of its conquests, as to give it even the shadow of our esteem, or support. Let not the shouts and huzzas of its victories lead us to forget the death-shriek of the soldiers massacred, and the sighs and tears of the bereaved widows and orphans, needlessly plunged into so fiery a trial. Oh, let not the illuminations and civic rejoicings for the success of our arms,

and all the glitter and parade that an unprincipled press would throw around the matter, sear and blind our consciences to the guilt, the horrid guilt, of scourging the provinces of Mexico with fire and sword, for so vile a purpose as that referred to ! What a prostitution of the energies of this republic,—how we disgrace our character in the sight of earth, and provoke the judgments of heaven, by sending our fleets and armies, under such circumstances to fight and slaughter our brethren !

Be it that Mexico did not fully satisfy our acknowledged claims upon her. Her feeble, distracted, miserable state, should have produced a generous forbearance on our part ; we should have sought to instruct and bless her in the art of peace, and in the pure principles of the religion of Christ. But how little of the spirit of the gospel do we manifest, when we so recklessly sound the clarion of war against that republic ; rushing into it, not as a herald of salvation, but as a messenger of woe ; scattering among the people—not among the men only, but among defenceless women and children—bombshells, rather than bibles ; pouring upon them a destructive tempest of “lead-en rain and iron hail,” instead of a genial shower of christian charity ; and all this too, with the motto spread out in broad capitals, before the face of nations and of high heaven,—“Our country right or wrong !” May God lead the nation to repent of and forsake the iniquity ; for it is exceedingly aggravated, of mountain weight and of crimson dye !

I do not, indeed, deny the right of strict self-defence. But we have sad evidence, that the present war is not one of defence, but of aggression ; a crusade against freedom and humanity ; a piece of most atrocious wickedness,—rendering its authors and abettors obnoxious to a tremendous retribution. In the language of Rev. J. S. C. Abbot, “War with Mexico is not war ; it is massacre ; it is a strong race demolishing a

feeble one ; it is a full grown man wreaking his vengeance on a child," and he well adds, respecting the same, in another place, "if our object is to *collect a debt*, surely this is an inhuman way of doing it. If our object is to *extend the area of negro slavery*, we can only say, that the means are worthy of the end."

And shall the base and cruel contest be continued. We wonder that there has not been such an outburst of opposing feelings from the true and the faithful, as to prevent its prosecution thus far. It is astonishing how suddenly and extensively the country has been lighted up with the fury, become in a blaze with the fierce passions of war. And sad is the recklessness with which political demagogues and a venal press, labor to fan the flame of strife. Many, indeed seem to be intoxicated with military glory, to be maddened with the lust of conquest. Though some hundred millions of money have been squandered by our government ; and on both sides, some twenty thousand persons have perished in the desolations of the camp and the battle-field, sending misery and distress to thousands more, though no tongue can tell the vices which the war has engendered, and the corrupting, demoralizing influence that it is diffusing through the various ranks of society,—we see, as yet, no solid ground to hope for the speedy cessation of the dire hostilities. How much farther shall we push our conquests ? How much longer shall we cause the plains of Mexico, and the ravines of the Cordilleras, to reverberate with the roar of cannon, and the wail of death, and crimson the soil with human gore ? Oh, how loudly does the voice of blood now cry to heaven from that devoted land !

Take heed, then, lest ye be beguiled, by the paltry embellishments, and delusive coloring, thrown over the Mexican war.

I am not speaking as a politician. I would introduce nothing, of a mere party nature, into the sacred desk. I do not dabble in that water here. I speak as a minister of that Savior whose kingdom is not of this world. The question is addressed, not to *party prejudice*, but to *conscience*, shall we, considering the motives, from which the war was begun, and is prosecuted—be flushed with joy at the bloody victories over our neighbors; reflect their burning dwellings, and crimsoned fields, by gay illuminations; and re-echo their dying groans, in acclamations of praise? Does it not become us, rather, in view of the war, which has hurried thousands, in the beauty, health, and strength of manhood, to an untimely grave, remorselessly severing the tenderest ties; and in view of the solemn denunciation of scripture, “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity,”—does it not become us, to humble ourselves before God on account of our sins, and implore his mercy; earnestly beseeching him,—stop, O stop this dreadful scourge, and say unto it, “Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further?”

2. In the present crisis of our national affairs, we are prone to pay our homage to the military hero, to the neglect of the man of true moral worth.

This evil tendency is intimately allied with that just named. If we honor the project of conquering Mexico, we shall hardly fail to honor the man, who gives his hand and heart to the work. Nay;—some, while they curse the war, in the strongest language, with the same mouth, bless the warrior; a gross incongruity to an unsophisticated mind. Be it that those of the United States army are bound, to a certain extent, to render obedience to the government. Shall they be mere passive tools in its hands, executing its orders, right or wrong, without asking any questions for conscience' sake? What strange infatuation,

then, is leading people to make such demonstrations in favor of the wilful conqueror.

I had hoped that civilization and christianity were so far advanced, that war would no more be considered, as the path to glory; that he, who could wield adroitly the devouring sword, and aim with precision the volleys of death, would not any longer, be deemed most worthy of the honors and offices of state. It is not so surprising, that in the dark ages, and among savage hordes, martial prowess should be ranked as the first of virtues. We wonder not, that among the degenerate antedeluvians, the mighty men were men of renown. But, that now in the nineteenth century of the christian era; that here in the heart of christendom, there should be such a passion for deeds of violence, as is evinced by the enlistments and applications for commissions; such sympathy and homage for the brute-like courage of the battle-field, as appears from the enthusiasm, with which the name of a conqueror is greeted,—this is the astounding, the melancholy fact. What! are we so averse to the pacific and benevolent spirit of the gospel, so blind to moral worth, so lost to virtue, that we can honor no name but that written in blood? Cannot one gain ascendancy here but by the sword? Does the path to distinction in this republic lie only through oppression and slaughter? Must a person tread down the African, and ride with iron hoof over the Mexican, in order to become qualified to rule over us? Can one reach the Presidential chair only by paving his way thereto, with mangled corpses, and the crushed and bleeding hearts of thousands of unoffending victims? Is it indeed true among us, that,

“One to destroy is murder by the law,
And gibbets keep the lifted hand in awe;
To murder thousands takes a specious name,
War’s glorious art, and gives immortal fame.”

Tell it not to the Mahommedans of Turkey, publish it not to the Pagans of India, lest the uncircumcised triumph over us, and laugh us to scorn !

When, O when shall high and noble sentiments of justice and humanity pervade the nation. When shall we breathe the spirit, and copy the example of him, who went about doing good ; and learn to say with him, "Blessed are the peace-makers," instead of shouting, "Honor to the blood-stained conquerors;" learn that better is he who saveth a country from war, than he that winneth a thousand battles.

As, therefore, we consider the eulogistic commemorations of those who have perished in the strife, and that the living conquerors of Monterey, Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo, are, to such an extent, the objects of popular adoration, we should beware, lest, at the sound of the fife and drum, we too join in the idolatrous homage. It is this practice which so fosters the martial spirit. While we pay our honors to the heroes of war, they will multiply upon us to our peril. Our own history attests the truth of the remarks, made by Gibbon, more than half a century ago ;—"As long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause upon their destroyers, than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters."

Besides, we should not forget that there is a bravery superior to that displayed in baring the bosom to volleys of musketry, or in facing the cannon's mouth. This may spring from those instincts which we possess in common with the brutes, from unreflecting ignorance, or the reckless hardihood of vice, it being often found to exist, in the highest degree, among piratical hordes. But, to be of unflinching, unbending integrity ; to act, like righteous Noah, from a sacred regard to conscience and to God, in the face of a world of scorn,—here is an instance of

the moral sublime, unparalleled in all the annals of martial prowess.

And then the *object* of christian heroism is something nobler than ever entered the mind, or fired the soul of thousands who have fallen in battle. The disciple of Jesus, like his Master, aims not to curse, but to bless ; not to wound, but to heal ; not to destroy, but to save men ;—and that too, with an everlasting salvation. And, while the music that attends the career of the warrior, is the shock of battle, the crash of falling cities, the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the wail of the bereaved ; what songs of prosperity and bliss ; what loud hallelujahs to God and the Lamb, from sin-pardoned and renewed souls, cheer on his way the soldier of Christ ! Yes, while the track of victorious war is like that of a tornado, or of the devouring fire, the triumphant march of the gospel may be traced like the flowing of a river by the fertility and beauty spread along its course. The streams that issue hence are what make glad the city of our God.

Let our public journals then speak of “the gallant exploits,” and “brilliant achievements,” by which so many have been slaughtered and taken captive, on the field of Mexico,—would you see that truly worthy of your admiration, look rather to the ransomed throng on Missionary ground, who have been redeemed from the wretched captivity to Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This is the sight pleasing to Heaven. It is the conversion of a sinner to Christ, which leads the angels to strike anew their harps of joy.

How much superior, then, in its *nature* and its *object*, is christian heroism, to mere military courage.

“There may be glory in the might
That treadeth nations down—
Wreaths for the crimson conqueror,
Pride for the kingly crown ;

But nobler is that triumph hour
 The disenthralled shall find,
 When vengeful passion boweth down
 Unto the Godlike mind."

In the words of scripture, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." What, then, if others do shout over the desepado of the battle-field, as though martial prowess were synonymous with patriotism, or even the *ne plus ultra* of all perfection; may we consider that the spirit of humanity, and christian benevolence, is an ornament essential to entitle one to our highest esteem.

In view, therefore, of the evil tendencies spoken of, fellow soldiers of Christ, awake to action. Honor, by your fidelity and devotedness, the cause which you have professedly espoused—the cause designed to cover the whole earth with peace, truth, and righteousness, and to fill all heaven with joy. And mark, for your encouragement, the *certainty* that success shall crown the efforts of the faithful.

We know not what will be the result of the Mexican contest. The prospect as yet seems dark. But those enlisted under the banner of the cross are engaged in no doubtful struggle. Their final victory over sin, and death, and hell, is sure as the word of the Eternal One. Are you, fellow combatants, prone to yield to despondency? to fear that you shall fail in the attempt to grapple with your foes—foes so many, so subtle, and so mighty? We must indeed experience the *tug* of war. For, as says the apostle, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But in the language of the same Apostle, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Behold the Cap-

tain of your salvation. He has fought the way through all the ranks of the enemy, and triumphantly ascended to glory. And rest assured that if you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him; that if you fight the good fight of faith, ever watching unto prayer, you shall come off conquerors, and "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

And mark, also, for your encouragement, the *prize of victory* in the christian warfare. It is estimated that of all the volunteers who engage in the present conflict with our neighbors, not more than half will ever return. Whether this estimate be correct or not, it is certain that those who plunge into the scene of commotion, do it at their peril. Mexico has already proved the burial-ground of thousands of our young men. But, though the soldier of Christ be in an enemy's land, beset behind and before with most wily foes, by the shield of faith he can quench all their fiery darts; and none, by stratagem, or surprise, by any Guerilla subtlety, or overpowering force, can pluck him out of the hands of his ever-vigilant and all-conquering leader. And what a reward awaits him, when the war is over, and he is discharged! He shall return to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon his head, and that too, to receive an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, together with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. And what an *escort* to attend him home!—no less than that of the Son of man in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. And what an *illumination* to light up the golden streets of the city of his destination!—an illumination made—not by the flickering, fading tapers of earth—made by what is more beautiful than the moon, more brilliant than the sun;—the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof.

Ye, then, who have enlisted under the banner of the cross, when you consider the heavenly cause in which you have en-

gaged and the certainty and the glory of the victory that shall crown the devoted laborer therein, be faithful unto death.

Shall the hearts of thousands burn with the fever of valor in the shameful, perilous conflict with Mexico ;—and will you be dead to all motives to enthusiasm in the christian warfare ? The members of a brigade, engaged in the battle of Buena Vista, are so sensitive to their supposed loss of reputation in not joining there at once in the death-grapple, that article after article has appeared in the public prints, to retrieve that supposed loss. Now, shall they, in a most inglorious strife, be all-tremblingly afraid of losing the vain applause of men,—and will any of the sacramental host of God's elect, be so wanting in the bravery of principle, so void of the spirit of christian heroism, as to shrink from obedience, seek to evade obligation, or fly from the post of duty, regardless of that honor which comes down from above ? What though we be not applauded here ? Not they who recklessly sweep hosts to destruction, but according to sacred writ, they who turn many to righteousness, though they live and die “unwept, unhonored, and unsung” on earth, shall shine as the stars forever and ever in the kingdom of God.

And, ere I close, may I not urge all present to enlist in such a service as that of Christ ? In order to trample down the Mexicans, and wrest from them their territory, and thus propagate Southern institutions, and open a new market for the slave-trade, the cry has gone through the land,—“Young men for the war.” Nor has that cry been in vain. Thousands have flocked to the standard. But who is on the Lord's side ? Who enlists under the banner of the cross ? As a recruiting officer then, of the Redeemer's cause, I would here lift up my voice and say, “Young men for the christian combat.” To conquer sin in your own heart, to stem the tide of corruption in the world around, and make earth the abode of purity and

love,—here—without going to Mexico—here is an opportunity to show your patriotism ; here is scope enough for your valor, here is an object to call forth all the ardor of your spirit. And will you not enlist ? Shall the drum be beaten and the trumpet be sounded for recruits, in vain ? The call is not to young men only, but to old men, to women and children even. “Whoever will” says Christ, “let him come.” By his broken body, and his blood that was shed, he pleads with you to enter his service. Be entreated to yield to the expostulation. Acknowledge Jesus as your Captain, and under him go forth to conquer,—not in cruel mockery, but in deed and truth—to “conquer a peace,” the peace of Mexico and the peace of the world. O when shall the olive-branch, instead of the sword, preside over the destinies of the nation !

A short time since, I stood on the margin of yonder sheet of water, when it was not disturbed by the slightest breeze, and was much interested in observing how distinctly and beautifully it reflected from its smooth, glassy surface the overarching skies ; while I could not but consider how soon the wind would so ruffle that surface, as to entirely break the charm of the delightful vision. And, thought I, it is not the earth as a theatre of wars and revolutions, converted into a field of battle and of blood ; but the earth when free from strife, its inhabitants dwelling as brethren in unity, the earth as the habitation of peace, which presents the counterpart, the reflected image of heaven, that abode of perfect and everlasting rest.





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